

Information Services Board Presentation on the Department of Social & Health Services' Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems Project

Prepared by Tom Parma, DIS/MOSTD (360) 902-3552.

Presenter

Dennis Braddock, Secretary

Uma Ahluwalia, Assistant Secretary for Children's Administration

Dawn Tatman, Director, Children's Administration Technology Services

Purpose of Appearance

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Children's Administration (CA) is seeking approval of its investment plan for the design, development, and implementation of the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS).

Previous ISB Appearance

October 18, 2004: DSHS project personnel appeared before the ISB Core Systems Committee and reviewed the contents and conclusions of its federal Advanced Planning Document (APD) as well as the plan for acquisition, design, development, and acquisition of a new SACWIS system. The committee made recommendations that DSHS elaborate on the benefits that will accrue to the children and families, the ultimate clients of the system.

Staff Recommendation to the Board

ISB staff recommend that the ISB approve DSHS' SACWIS Investment Plan.

Staff Recommendation to the Agency

ISB staff recommends that the project modify its organization and management structure to have the Quality Assurance (QA) vendor report directly to the Executive Sponsor.

The APD includes a section entitled "Project Organization and Management." The organization chart shows the QA vendor with a solid line, direct reporting relationship to the project director. The QA vendor has a dashed line, indirect reporting relationship to the executive sponsor. ISB staff believe that these relationships should be reversed.

Background

DSHS CA provides services to children and families designed to reduce the risk of abuse, prevent out-of-home placement, and assure safety and permanency for children in care. In fiscal year 2003, DSHS received 94,800 new requests for services. While some of these requests were for voluntary services, over 77,000 involved potential abuse and neglect, and over half of those requests required further investigation. The investigations involved nearly 44,200 alleged child victims. Approximately 7,100 children were placed in foster care. A nearly equal number of children exited from out-of-home care, most returned to their families while others were adopted or placed in guardianships. DSHS also licenses and administers over 6,200 foster homes in the state. All the service detail related to complaints, investigations, placement, and outcomes must be captured and maintained in the SACWIS system.

Recently CA began an enterprise-wide reform initiative entitled "Kids Come First II" (KCF) to strengthen its service offerings and address challenges it will face in the future. This initiative will have significant impacts on agency policy and worker practices.

The legacy Case and Management Information Systems (CAMIS) is the primary system used by CA to manage the services it delivers to children and families. CAMIS is used to track clients statewide, and produce selected forms and management reports. Approximately 2,700 social workers, clerical staff, and managers within CA throughout the state use CAMIS. CAMIS is also used by organizations external to the CA such as the Office of the Attorney General, public health nurses, the Washington Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, and Native American Tribes.

CAMIS was built in 1989 using then state-of-the-art mainframe technology. In the late 1990s CA began a project to provide a GUI interface to CAMIS.

The demands on CAMIS continue to increase dramatically due to changing business practices brought on by KCFII and other agency initiatives. Many of these demands are not satisfied by the current interface and the existing technology is not well suited to satisfy them.

Limitations of CAMIS

CAMIS is unable to support many of the requirements brought on by KCFII. CA's technical assessment found that most of the issues with the current system cannot be mitigated without increasing cost and decreasing stability. Significant issues facing CAMIS include:

- The middleware component of CAMIS, SysQL, is no longer produced or supported by the vendor. The cost of replacing this component is estimated at over \$3 million. Significant portions of the application would have to be rewritten to utilize another middleware product.
- It is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain CAMIS data integrity.
- It is becoming increasingly difficult to find IT personnel capable of maintaining or enhancing the system.
- CAMIS was designed to support the policies and procedures of the agency in 1989; these are often hard coded in the system. The work processes embodied in CAMIS continue to diverge from actual practice.
- There is new functionality needed based on business initiatives that cannot be accommodated with the technology underlying CAMIS, or it cannot be accommodated in a timely manner.
- DSHS need to extend CAMIS beyond DSHS to support the needs of the service providers, county level agencies, and foster families.
- CA is unable to meet the community and Legislative requests, particularly those dealing with service outcomes.